

Please word-process all assignmentsbut handwrite your exams?



Coming back to university after working I have had to relearn pen and paper

I think better with a pen

Is it a good idea to have the choice to handwrite or to type essay-examinations?

revision styles are changing because of computers

Not sure I can type fast enough

Workplaces are computerised

I would handwrite. I haven't had the practice typing under pressure. I don't want to risk doing badly in an exam. At no point in my school did I get any practice typing under timed conditions.

In an era where students are expected to submit essays and assignments in a digital form, is it fair to expect them to abandon their keyboards when they sit formal examinations? Given the choice (and a chance to practice!) first year Divinity students have mostly opted to handwrite:



	Dec 2010	May 2011
Typed	13 (9.4%)	11 (8.6%)
Hand	125	117

Would you ever consider typing for an exam? Yes 57 (55%); No 46 (45%)

What would YOU do?
Add a dot to indicate your choice!

Type	
Handwrite	

The technical solution :
Exam4 from Extegrity.com
Students install on their own laptop



- Versions for PC and Mac
- Locks laptop so no access to internet / hard drive
- Basic word processor only
- Regular snapshots of student work
- Data encoded
- Questions still on paper
- Diagrams best done on paper
- Final submission via wireless network
- Scripts can be printed for marking
- Foreign language characters OK
- Student can change font size, colour and set timer
- Spellcheck option determined by teaching team



"Just a quick email to say what a massive difference it made being able to sit my exam by laptop. I reckon it made about 15% difference!"

Compared to those who handwrote, students who chose to type

- Changed more words
- Moved sentences about
- Valued facts *and* argument
- Wrote in a style akin to coursework
- Felt that they used their time well
- Judged how much to write OK

To collect data about real behaviour in real exams we surveyed students immediately after taking their exam, but before they left the hall, asking them about how they had gone about composing their exam responses.

Are coursework and exams comparable?...

Although students appreciate that in coursework the argument is critical, *some students* believe that exams are about getting down as many facts as possible, and that the argument doesn't really matter! They don't see the need to be able to manipulate and word process examination responses. This may be a bigger issue for first year students who might be less familiar with what is wanted in a university context.

I think I'd get bogged down into the formatting of it and reformatting it into the right argument, progression and things like that, rather than writing stuff.

I find computers distracting because I can change things too easily

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Good exam questions require students to take time to think; they are not about writing as much as possible as fast as possible. Most students are jolly good at typing anyway!

Student self reported speed typing vs handwriting			
	2007	2010	2011
I handwrite faster	12 (35%)	29 (21%)	31 (24%)
I type faster	9 (26%)	49(35%)	51(39%)
Not much difference	13 (38%)	42 (30%)	28 (21%)

Typing speed is a red herring!

